

Transcription of section of October 8, 1996,

Council meeting dealing with Dental Clinic

Shelton: Anyone have any questions or comments regarding the presentation, the goals, or the aspects of Mr. Boardman's presentation or anything you wish to bring forward?

Kochendarfer: I've just got a request. Since Mr. Henderson is here, Mr. Henderson can you speak to the issue of the dental clinic and who it would service and how many people - that sort of thing?

Henderson: I'll give you a brief background - there has been, and there currently is, a very dilapidated, and I think that is the only word to use, dental trailer located at Bedford Primary School for the last several years. It's operated by the Central Virginia Health Department one day a week - on Wednesdays - to provide dental care for Head Start and low income children that don't have other dental care. We've been in dialog with Dr. Joanna Harris, who's the Director of the Central Virginia Health Department, for several years on the tremendous need to expand the dental program in the Bedford School system. She has identified lack of dental care as the number one unmet health care need in the Bedford community. The current facility is able to see less than 25 percent of the eligible children. There is no fluoridation program in Bedford County Schools right now. And there's also a tremendous number of adults in the community that have virtually no access to dental care. So what we, the Bedford Community Health Foundation, have done is to take the initiative to: No. 1, replace the current facility, which is literally about to fall apart. The Bedford Community Health Foundation made a grant of \$24,259.00 to buy a brand new unit - 12 ft. by 64 ft - it is completed. It is sitting on a lot in Pennsylvania waiting to be transported here as soon as the site is ready - it was completed last week. So we have made that grant - actually have delivered the check to the County School System office and done our part to take the local initiative to make something happen. As a result of that initiative, Dr. Harris is keenly interested in expanding the scope of the services the Health Department provides in the Bedford community. On Thursday of this week, I will be mailing a grant application to the Virginia Health Care Foundation in Richmond, under the auspices of Bedford Community Health Foundation, we will be the requesting agency, asking for a three year grant from the Virginia Health Care Foundation to expand from one day a week to four days a week the Head Start and children's program at the new clinic once it's sited there. I should back up and point out that in addition to moving the existing equipment from the current facility to the new facility, the Health Department is going to be putting in a brand new X-ray machine and some other equipment that they haven't currently had - so it's going to be an upgrade in the quality of the equipment. Their goal, and the primary reason we're asking for the outside grant from the Virginia Health Care Foundation, is to get more payroll dollars to pay more dentists - they would be Virginia Department of Health staff people - dentists, hygienists, and dental assistants - in the Head Start and school children program. As part of this proposal - it's really a three part proposal - we're also proposing starting for the first time ever - a system-wide, school system-wide fluoridation program for all children in grades K - 6 and that number is over 5,000 children. Almost 90 percent of the children in Bedford County are on well water with no fluoridation. The lead dentist, Dr. Kimbell, estimates that we could reduce dental cavities in these children by 65 percent with an effective and continuous fluoridation program. The average child that comes into his chair the first time has four or more cavities. So it's a pretty big problem. A third component part, and I think a part just to tell it the way it is that's obviously given some people some concern is, that Dr. Harris, in the process of us developing this proposal, has offered to the Bedford Christian Free Clinic, the use of this new facility one night a week to provide for the first time ever, dental care under the auspices of the Free Clinic. There are no spaces at the existing building on Washington Street to put in dental rooms - there's no money to pay for equipment down there. This facility is going to be fully equipped and ready to be used. Patterning

after what the Free Clinic of Central Virginia does in Lynchburg, they operate a one night a week dental clinic with a rotating basis of volunteer dentists. Usually 8 to 10 people receive appointments. It's done by appointment so there's no mass flood of people coming in and queuing up outside of their facility for dental appointments - it's only done by appointment. As of last Monday, the Central Virginia Free Clinic had a waiting list of 405 people, of which about 15 percent are Bedford people, waiting for dental care. When you're only seeing 8 to 10 a week it doesn't take a lot of math computation to figure out that some those people are going to have to wait 8 or 9 months before they see the dentist. That's a long time to tell somebody they have to wait to see the dentist. There are not many other recourses for these folks. So what we have done at the Foundation, to recap, is we have paid for the new facility. Hopefully, if we can get it installed and if we get grant funding, we have reason to believe - we've already made it past the first screen with the Virginia Health Care Foundation - so we're actually down to the point of the final proposal. We made it pass the first cut, if you would. If we get funding from them, we will be able to expand the hours during school hours to see a tremendous increase in the number of children that'll be put through the program. There's some lengthy goals, I won't take your time to do it, but the whole gist is, is to get more children through the system, get them into the system, get their teeth with the fluoride rinse program to cut down on their cavities- to take care of the cavities they do have, and also to do a lot of other things to promote oral hygiene and dental care in the school system. And as a side benefit of it would be, because we'd have this new facility, once again Dr. Harris is really, and it was at her initiative she offered it up, to say I'd be willing to make it available one night a week to the Bedford Christian Free Clinic. Dr. Buck Lovelace, who is a former chairman of the Bedford Community Health Foundation, has, on his own initiative, contacted all the dentists in Bedford. I talked to him this afternoon - he was drafting a letter to me which will be sent in with the application, and the last word I had was that he had verbal commitments from every dentist, but one, in the community to volunteer on a rotating basis. And it would be one dentist there at a time on whatever night of the week it might be. There would be a dental assistant and a hygienist there with him. And, once again, they'd be seeing 8 to 10 people. But the local dental community has really rallied around this issue to help. I say again that Dr. Joanna Harris, who's head of the Health Department, says that dental care is the No. 1 unmet health care need in the Bedford community, so we at the Foundation have taken a local initiative to provide a facility. We need some help from the City to get the new facility sited. Any then I'm quite hopeful and optimistic that we'll get some funding out of the Virginia Health Care Foundation to help us expand the programs to meet the need.

Brookshier: Where on site were you looking exactly - where would the . . .

Henderson: I might ought to defer to Dr. Kent, but if you're familiar with the back side of the Primary School, the existing trailer sits right in the middle of a little back gravel parking lot. If you were to go down past the Health Department, past the Rec Department Office and go up the hill, headed up with the Elk's Home on your left, there's a row of pine trees there, a grass strip on the side of the road. As soon as those pine trees stop, there's a small grass area, there's a little chain link fence there now, and then there's a slight bank, and then the gravel parking lot starts. My understanding is that it would be sited in that grassy area facing the fence that runs parallel to the road that blocks off the Elk's cow pasture there. So you go around by the Rec Department, up the hill, before you get to the school it would be there with its own little dedicated parking area. Parking is a severe problem at the Primary School now and this would actually free up spaces that are consumed by the existing trailer that's parked right in the middle of the parking lot. And it would also give it its own little separate identity there.

Kochendarfer: It be actually be less viewable to the residents on College?

Henderson: Be farther away - be farther away and it'd be down the hill.

Kochendarfer: The other question I had to ask you was could you explain to us why with Medicare and Medicaid these children are not being seen or these adults not being seen by dentists in the community?

Henderson: Well, like a lot of other government programs, the Medicaid Program by edict says that these

children are eligible for (managed?) [cough] care through the Medicaid system. But if there's no Medicaid providers it become a mute point, and that's the reality - the reimbursement levels are such that there's just basically no Medicaid providers.

Kochendarfer: So none of the local dentists want to . . .

Henderson: Well, I wouldn't want to speak for them but I think the reality is that . . .

Kochendarfer: - - it's not worth their while.

Henderson: Exactly - it's actually a loss type situation. The reimbursement won't even cover overhead.

Wandrei: Question - just out of curiosity sake - why is this project tied in with the school when apparently the State Health Department is behind it? It seems to me that wouldn't it be more practical to put it next to the Health Department?

Henderson: Well I think, first of all, the beneficiaries of the program, the Head Start children, are right there - Bedford Primary School is the No. 1 site for Head Start in the community. There's other Head Start programs around the County - the children are right there. And the school system also has the transportation to bring youngsters from other facilities into that school. It's a joint venture between the Health Department and the school system.

Wandrei: You have the Health Department close by - wouldn't it be wise to have all the health care people together?

Henderson: Once again, I'm not sure if I'm the right one to answer that question - but I think it's a joint venture between school system and part of your audience is right there on site, and if you, granted the Health Department is only a few hundred yards away, but it would be logistically a little more difficult if it was on the opposite corner of that big block.

Shelton: What percentage of the students that will make use of this dental facility will come out of the Bedford Primary School facility? What percentage do you see coming ---

Henderson: I don't think I'm qualified to answer that. (Henderson asked someone else) Answer was: 50 percent.

Brookshier: How many nights a week do you propose this be open?

Henderson: If the Free Clinic is operated, there would be one night a week, and I don't know what night that would be.

Brookshier: One night?

Henderson: Keep in mind that's completely separate from child component done during school hours.

Brookshier: I understand that - (. . .children's?)

Ballard: Has this requirement been met by the Zoning Administrator? Has he approved this thing?

Gross: The City does not presently have a request. We understand the request is coming. We've met, we've discussed it. We have no problem with the school component. It is not in concurrence with our zoning laws to operate a clinic, a dental clinic, in a residential zone. So there are some problems with the clinic portion of

it. There's no problem with the ancillary use by the schools for a dental clinic for school children.

Henderson: If there is going to be some protracted debate over the free clinic component, I would certainly ask Council if at least get approval for the site selection of the facility and go ahead and get it sited for the school component and we can certainly discuss and work on the other component down the road - but I'd hate to see us hold up on locating the facility and hold up on the school component, which is the most important component of this program. So if it's a two part issue, I would urge Council or whoever within the City has to approve it, to allow the siting of the facility - cause it's going to take some time to transfer the equipment and do all the hookups during which time winter's coming on and we need to get that part done, and if we need to debate on the pros and cons of the free clinic component that can be done independently of going forward with the school component.

Gross: It doesn't require Council approval. It is covered under the zoning, and so if we were to receive that application tomorrow we could approve it tomorrow.

Berry: I'd have to say though, that the other, the free clinic component, has to (receive?) Planning Commission and City Council review, and there are entirely different requirements, such as screening, so the trailer might have to be moved subsequently. (. . .? take that into account)

Tharp: . . . ?in the siting to go ahead and site it by the requirements, by the stiffer requirements.

Shelton: Well that means going through the Planning Commission and City Council process of approving that use - that would actually be a non-conforming use, is that correct?

Berry: Conditional use permit.

Shelton: Conditional use, Ok.

Tharp: But if it were sited that way now on the lot, that would then prevent . . .? a little bit later.

Berry: I'm just not sure what conditions the Council - you'd have to have a public hearing - and then determine what conditions you were going to put on it or whether you would grant the permit.

Shelton: Well, we're headed in the direction though with this that's outside, I think, the purview of what this item on the agenda is for and it's not even before us at this point - regarding a conditional use. So I don't want to get into that until that actually goes through the Planning Commission process and everything, if that's the case, otherwise we'll prejudice the process and that's not what it's intended to do. Let me just ask Molly if the School Board has, in your support and endorsement of the placement of the trailer, if that also includes the additional use for the free clinic purposes.

Molly Thompson: Yes I think as far as our discussion, yes.

Shelton: So the City School Board supports it for the dental purposes for the school children as well as the evening . . .

Molly Thompson: . . .evening program . . .

Shelton: Ok.

Molly Thompson: There's been also some discussion that through the evening program perhaps some of the high school students . . .? they could take advantage of using the dental trailer.

Brookshier: Now, wait a minute. Just for clarification, the School Board is also endorsing the evening program?

Molly Thompson: Right. . . ? that then it would perhaps be available for older students and . . .? of the students.

Shelton: Ok, any other questions, you know, on that, with Roger at the podium right now, regarding the dental clinic?

Tharp: There's some confusion about whose court the ball is in and I think the City is saying we're going to keep it out of our court or keep it in our court the least amount of time. When we have an application, we can act on it.

Shelton: And that's the (application purpose?) of siting - getting the new trailer in - getting it set up for the school purposes for that use and then any other proposed use of that would come through, am I correct, through the zoning process, conditional use request.

Gross: That's correct. Any non-conforming use would need to follow that route.

Shelton: Alright. I think that we're all clear on that - that part of it. Any other things you'd like to add Roger?

Henderson: No sir. I just appreciate the opportunity to tell you what the Foundation's trying to do. . . . (cough) to make a very serious problem and get some solution to that problem.

Shelton: We appreciate your being here and answering those questions on that. And I don't think there's any question about the (cause?) I think some of the questions that you're hearing is certainly Council's responsibility in terms of the zoning regulations in administering those properly and fairly and in the best interest of the City. And that may or may not come to us.

Brookshier: It sounds that what it . . . you may be getting just a slight bit of challenge from Council tonight but past all of that it is great news to hear that you upgraded that facility for the dental program for the school and that is good news.

Shelton: Roger, and members of the School Board, I really wasn't aware that the dental trailer had been there that long. I thought it was an old construction trailer sitting back there.

Brookshier: I did too.

Shelton: It's going to be a major improvement there. It really looks awful.

Henderson: It's dilapidated - terrible is what it is.

Shelton: It's going to be a significant improvement. Community Health Foundation again - ya'll do a lot of tremendous things for the community. Really do.

Henderson: Thank you.